

Student Athletes

The thought of playing college sports can be intimidating and exciting. A college recruiter can offer all sorts of promises and perks to get you to come to a particular school. Big-time NCAA Division I sports like football, basketball, and baseball aren't all colleges have to offer. Many students will be recruited for soccer, softball, hockey, cheerleading, gymnastics, and even golf. If you plan to play an NCAA sport, here are some things to keep in mind.



► Ask a lot of questions.

Coaches and recruiters should be open to all of your questions. No question is too big or too small. Talk to current and former athletes, too. See how they feel about their experiences at the school, in the community, and on the team. Sometimes the coach and the athletic program are great, but the academic and social scenes are not so great.

► Don't rush yourself.

If there are lots of colleges that want you, take your time. You do not need to declare your school of choice right away (although colleges like it when you declare a choice early). Give yourself time to visit your top schools, take notes, and compare your options.

► Watch for dishonest recruitment practices.

If a program is willing to break or bend the rules to recruit you, it might be more likely to break promises to its student athletes or other NCAA rules. If your college ends up on NCAA probation while you're a student athlete, you could miss out on the chance to participate in post-season games or gain national exposure. Character does count.

► Meet all NCAA eligibility rules.

Before colleges can recruit you, you must register with the NCAA's Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. To register you have to meet minimum GPA and SAT I® or ACT® standards and pass several core high school courses. Remember, you cannot play or practice in Division I or II unless you meet these requirements. Visit the NCAA's Web site, <http://www.ncaa.org/eligibility/cbsa> for more information.

► Have a backup plan.

Most high school athletes will not receive college scholarships. Of those who do, most will not go on to play in professional leagues. Make sure that you are strong academically as well as athletically. That way, you will still be able to go to college and reach your dreams whether you get a scholarship or not.